

IN MEMORIAM

DORIS ISABEL JOHNSON

05 October 1911 – 24 September 2005

Doris Johnson, one of the Club's most loved members, passed away on 24 September 2005 just one week before her 94th birthday.

Doris joined the Club in June 1964 and was elected to Council in 1980 and served as Secretary in 1981–1983. By April 1983 she began coordinating the Retired and Leisured Group which she continued for nearly 20 years. She played a pivotal role in this group as well as helping out at most meetings of the main club. Her good cheer and support will be sorely missed.



Doris Johnson (second from left) at a Retired and Leisured Group excursion to Herdsman Lake in October 1996.

The following eulogy was read by Doris Johnson's nephew at her Memorial Service.

Welcome to this celebration of the life of my Aunt Doris, known more commonly in the family as AD, Dot or Dottie. It was a life so full of interest that I can indicate only briefly her essential biographical details in the time available.

She was born on 5 October 1911, the fourth child in a family of eight. Her parents were pioneering settlers in the Kalamunda district.

1900 - August Johannson and Maggie Ervin met in Bulong, in the WA goldfields. He was a Swedish seaman who, aged 19 and with seven shillings in his pocket, jumped ship in Rockingham in 1891, and by 1900 was prospecting in the Bulong area. Maggie was from a farming family in Victoria who had come to Bulong to keep house for her older brother Bob.

1902 - On becoming naturalized, August changed his name to Johnson.

1903 - August Johnson and Maggie Ervin married in Fremantle.

1904 - First child born.

1905 - They bought 12 acres of Crown land in Lesmurdie, built a shack with bush materials, hessian and iron, later a 3 roomed cottage with stone from the property. Grew annual crops, strawberries, peas etc.

1906 - Second child born. 1908 Third child born. 1911 Aunt Dot born. All four children so far were girls. With further clearing of the property an orchard was gradually established. Times were hard and money scarce. By the time Dot was ten, four more children had been born, two boys and two girls. Money still scarce!

1916 to 1926 - Dot attends Kalamunda School, a two mile walk each way through the bush. There was no high school in the area, and the remarkably dedicated schoolmaster simply extended the range of his classes to Junior High School level to give local kids the opportunity of a secondary education.

1926 - Dot passes the junior Certificate Examinations.

1927 - She attends Underwood Business College, tuition fees being paid for by Nora (sister no 2), then a teacher. In a

competition between the interstate Underwood colleges, Dot comes top in shorthand, and is a runner up in typing. At the end of that year she begins her long working life by joining TPA as a shorthand typist. The Depression begins to be felt. Her salary is reduced from 35 to 30 shillings per week, but she remains employed.

1929 - Travels to Sydney by ship (and who can blame her?). She remains in Sydney for the next 15 years, holding down some top secretarial jobs, with only one brief holiday back in WA.

1932 - Begins to study singing with Gertrude Hutton in Sydney. Joins the Sydney University Musical Society and sings in *Dido and Aeneas* and *oratoria*: is generally thrilled to bits by the experience.

1944 - Returns to WA to be present (and sing) at Frank and Maureen's wedding. Joins WM Adams and Co as secretary to the manager. Saves furiously for her first overseas trip. Joins University of WA Choral Soc.

1951 - **AT LAST.** Voyage to UK via Suez fortifies her view that sea travel is the only civilized way to go. Works in London, not discouraged by the persistence of food rationing, nevertheless glad of a food parcel from Australia when she returns from her first exploration



Doris Johnson's 90th birthday, 5 October 2001.

- of continental Europe. Becomes a member of YHA and buys a rucksack (5 shillings and 11 pence at Army Disposals), then tours Scotland and the Lakes District.
- 1952 *highlights* - Standing for hours in the cold to view King George VI's lying in state in Westminster Hall, then watching the cortège going to Paddington station on its way to Windsor for the burial. Watching Queen Mary's funeral procession. What a lot of fun you can have in London. At Easter that year, did a bike tour of Cornwall with two of her buddies. Aug/Sept. by boat to Helsinki (saunas and cold plunges) and Stockholm (whole families of Swedish relatives).
- 1953 *highlights* - Sitting in an open seat in The Mall in pouring rain watching all comings and goings of the Coronation. Later that June, a YHA trip through North Wales, Derbyshire and other counties.
- 1954 - Major hitchhiking tour through France, Italy, Germany etc. between April and June. Knee groped by louché French truck driver. Side trip to Malta with aunts Sue and Bid to attend opening by the Queen of a memorial honouring RAF and RAAF crew members shot down whose bodies weren't recovered, including their brother Con. Parents getting old and frail. Saves furiously for trip home.
- 1955 - Completes circumnavigation of the globe by returning home via Panama, Tahiti, Fiji and New Zealand. Wonderful voyage, but understandably finds it a little hard to settle back in "Dullsville", WA.
- 1959 - After a couple of lacklustre jobs, finds one which is exactly her cup of tea: secretary to the executive officer of the FOP. Finds everything about the job congenial, not least being her allocation of two free tickets to most events, so during the Festival Season is seldom home. Life becomes rich and full again. She remains in this job until her retirement in 1976.
- 1961 - Her father dies in his 90th year. 1962 Her mother dies.
- 1963 - Buys a house - "Dot's Spot" - at 6 Meriwa St. Puts down roots? Not likely!
- 1966 - First long service leave. Visits Eva and me in the wild of the East Sepik District, New Guinea.
- 1974 - Second long service leave. Overseas world tour, by ship (the Marconi) to Greece, then with a Eurail Pass through Europe and Scandinavia, ending up in London, visiting friends not seen for 19 years.

1975 - Her richly-deserved retirement. Embroidery and afternoon telly? Again, not likely.

1976 - Globetrotting again for seven months. Norwegian cargo/passenger ship to SE Asia, Japan and Vancouver. Bus through the Rockies to Edmonton to visit her goddaughter and family, then by train to Ottawa, Niagara and New York. Flew to London, spent July with relatives in Scandinavia, August and September in UK with a short diversion to south of France to visit her best buddy.

May 1979 - Long range expedition to Beverley Springs Station, E Kimberley. 1983 N Qld safari to Cape York Peninsula. 1984 WA Nats club expedition to Prince Regent and Hunter Rivers. 1981 Tour of China with another best buddy. Easter 1987 WA Nats Club trip to the Abrolhos Island.

Doris Johnson had wonderful supportive neighbours. She was devoted to the Naturalists' Club and frequently talked about the comradeship and intellectual stimulation she derived from her long association with them over the years.

The following tribute was written by Kevin Coate

Doris Johnston was a long time member and stalwart of the Naturalists' Club, and one of those wonderful people from the older generation who in this modern age still retained old world values and kept up appearances no matter what. She had that happy knack, be it pottering around the garden, bush walking or just sitting at an office desk, of appearing neat and tidy with scarcely a hair out of place. Doris had a good sense of humour and was one of the hardy group of Naturalists' Club members, who embarked on a voyage of discovery along the Kimberley Coast in 1984. It was a trip she enjoyed immensely, and one which she often liked to recall when in company.

While based in Prince Frederick Harbour, having retraced Phillip Parker King's 1820 trip by whale boat to the upper reaches of the Hunter River, we went ashore near the confluence of the tidal section into the fresh water, to explore further upstream on foot. The tide dropped dramatically baring muddy banks while we were away, and the dinghies had to be relocated to the base of a large rock projecting out from the bank of the river in order to

board. It was a difficult spot to embark as it was fairly muddy and there was a drop of about six metres to the boat that could be negotiated with care. The dinghy nosed into the rock and Doris was first to clamber down to get aboard. In the process her foot slipped on a piece of mud clinging to the top of the rock.

Many of those there at the time, still talk in awe of how Doris appeared to bounce about three times on her bottom, picking up speed as she progressed down the rock. Luckily she landed on the covered in section of the bow of the dinghy, from where her momentum and the uplift of the dinghy propelled her to a sitting position facing forward in the back seat of the boat. Not having lost her composure for a moment, the instant she made contact with the seat, she produced a compact from her top pocket and adjusted her makeup. Some swear to this day, she had it out before landing.

The following tribute was written by Margo Bentley

At the meetings of the Retired and Leisured Group, Doris always welcomed us with great warmth and brought us all together in a very close friendship. One had to only miss a single meeting to receive a phone call from her to enquire if all was well. She maintained many contacts with members unable to come to meetings and brought their news to us.

She had made many trips with the Club and had travelled overseas and she had a deep interest and joy in hearing at our meetings about other member's travels and adventures, including the Long Range Excursions.

As a devoted gardener, both she and all of us were fascinated when members brought in and spoke about their wildflower and garden specimens or their photographs of them.

Music and the arts were very much to her taste and discussions about them enriched the time we spent together and we went to a number of exhibitions at the Museum, Art Gallery and State Library, including one on French exploration and another was the Ellis Rowan exhibition.

Our meetings have been a real pleasure due to Doris' interest in and love of the Group. We all have happy memories of them and of her.